Listing of Claims:

1 – 15 (canceled)

16. (currently amended) A process for packaging a food product comprising:

a) advancing a base web of thermoformable material to a forming station and thermoforming a portion of the web at the forming station into at least one pot; and

b) transferring the web with formed pot to a filling station and filling the pot with the food product;

at the same time

c) advancing a top web to a punching station and punching at least one product dispensing aperture in the web;

and thereafter conducting the further steps of

d) bringing the base and top webs together in register so that an area of top web defining a lid and having the punched aperture therein overlies a mouth of a filled pot and sealing the lid to the pot to form a food package;

e) advancing the package ~~or packages~~ to a cooling chamber and holding ~~them~~ the package suspended therein until the product in the package has solidified; and

f) fixing a sealing member over the aperture at any point after step c.

17. (previously presented) A process according to claim 16 in which more than one pot is formed in the web at a time.

18. (previously presented) A process according to claim 17 in which a row, column or array of pots is formed at each pass of the forming station and simultaneously a corresponding number of lids is formed in the top web.

19. (currently amended) A process according to claim 16 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and the lid ~~including a bearing surface or a portion thereof is provided~~ with sufficient rigidity to enable the pot to be collapsed against it.

20. (previously presented) A process according to claim 16 in which the top web is thermoformed to fabricate it into a truncated dome-shaped lid and the aperture is formed in the planer surface of the dome.

21. (previously presented) A process according to claim 16 in which the aperture is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the aperture.

22. (previously presented) A process according to claim 16 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and a rigid insert is provided intermediate the lid and the food product in the pot to provide a bearing surface against which the pot can be collapsed, the insert having a dispensing opening in register with the aperture of the lid to enable the food product to be dispensed therethrough.

23. (previously presented) A process according to claim 22 in which the dispensing opening is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the opening.

24. (previously presented) A process according to claim 22 in which a shoulder is formed adjacent the mouth of the pot for receiving the insert.

25. (currently amended)) A process according to claim 16 in which the package is packages ~~are~~ separated from the webs after the sealing of the aperture by cutting the area of webs between adjacent packages or groups of packages.

26. (previously presented) A process according to claim 16 in which the areas between adjacent packages and/or groups of packages is scored to enable individual packages or groups of packages to be snapped apart.

27. – 30 (canceled)

31. (previously presented) A process according to claim 17 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and the lid or a portion thereof is provided with sufficient rigidity to enable the pot to be collapsed against it.

32. (previously presented) A process according to claim 18 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and the lid or a portion thereof is provided with sufficient rigidity to enable the pot to be collapsed against it.

33. (previously presented) A process according to claim 17 in which the top web is thermoformed to fabricate it into a truncated dome-shaped lid and the aperture is formed in the planer surface of the dome.

34. (previously presented) A process according to claim 18 in which the top web is thermoformed to fabricate it into a truncated dome-shaped lid and the aperture is formed in the planer surface of the dome.

35. (previously presented) A process according to claim 19 in which the top web is thermoformed to fabricate it into a truncated dome-shaped lid and the aperture is formed in the planer surface of the dome.

36. (previously presented) A process according to claim 17 in which the aperture is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the aperture.

37. (previously presented) A process according to claim 18 in which the aperture is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the aperture.

38. (previously presented) A process according to claim 19 in which the aperture is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the aperture.

39. (previously presented) A process according to claim 20 in which the aperture is shaped so as to impart a desired cross-sectional shape to product extruded through the aperture.

40. (previously presented) A process according to claim 17 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and a rigid insert is provided intermediate the lid and the food product in the pot to provide a bearing surface against which the pot can be collapsed, the insert having a dispensing opening in register with the aperture of the lid to enable the food product to be dispensed therethrough.

41. (previously presented) A process according to claim 18 in which the pot is deformable toward the lid to dispense the food product through the aperture in the lid and a rigid insert is provided intermediate the lid and the food product in the pot to provide a bearing surface against which the pot can be collapsed, the insert having a dispensing opening in register with the aperture of the lid to enable the food product to be dispensed therethrough.

42. (previously presented) A process according to claim 23 in which a shoulder is formed adjacent the mouth of the pot for receiving the insert.